

NOPSEMA: Lifting operations dangerous occurrences and injuries

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The Australian National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA) has published a [safety bulletin](#) relating to lifting operations in the offshore industry.

IOGP Life Saving Rules:



Safe mechanical lifting

What happened?

Lifting operations continue to result in significant incidents and serious injuries, despite the hazards and controls involved being well known. NOPSEMA, over the past five years, has received a consistent pattern of notifications of injuries and dangerous occurrences during lifting operations in the offshore industry. While each event has its own specific set of circumstances, NOPSEMA has undertaken analysis of the investigation findings from which a number of recurring themes have emerged, including (IMCA bold):

- Generic practical application and verification of **Control of Work** systems.
- Failure to recognise the materiality of **changes to risks**, both prior to and during execution.
- **Failure to adequately consider manufacturer instructions** and guidance in relation to plant and equipment.
- Failure to recognise or control personnel being in the Line of Fire or Drop Zone during operations.
- Inadequate training, competence and experience.

Lessons to learn

Taken together, these themes highlight underlying weaknesses in how lifting operations are planned, managed and executed. NOPSEMA highlights the following lessons:

- **Change management**
 - Are we managing change with a formal Management of Change process? Change should be considered and managed appropriately for all lifting tasks, whether formally or informally. It should be recognised that a routine lift can easily drift into a non-routine lift, and that original planning processes can become wholly inadequate for the task.
- **Training, competence and experience**
 - A number of events attributed failure to the inability of persons to recognise plant, equipment and task hazards, or even due to inexperience or lack of specific training. Planners, supervisors and

lifting team members should be competent to supervise and/or undertake the lifting operation, trained and familiar with the plant and equipment being used and sufficiently experienced for their designated role within the lifting team.

- **OEM instructions / equipment fit for purpose**

- Follow the instructions and guidance of the Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs), to ensure that relevant plant and equipment is fit for purpose and used and maintained within its intended safe operating parameters.

- **Drop Zones / Line of Fire**

- Controls may include exclusion zones and barricading, but also the rigorous requirement to use handsfree tools (tag lines, push sticks etc).
- Where is the edge of the Drop Zone or Line of Fire location?

- **Control of Work**

- In addition to the factors outlined above, NOPSEMA observed that failures frequently occurred at the interface between planning, authorisation, supervision and execution of lifting activities, despite the existence of otherwise comprehensive systems and procedures. Routine lifts are often underestimated, and short cutting the planning systems can prevent opportunities to adequately control the risks.

Actions to consider

Despite the fact that most organisations have formal systems and procedures related to the above controls, these failures continue to occur on a regular basis. Are those systems robust enough? Look at key risk controls for lifting operations, and consider:

- Do these controls work in the real world, or are they becoming strained, complacent or assumed?
- How might the control fail during planning or execution?
- What safeguards are in place to prevent those failures?
- What safeguards are in place to prevent harm should a failure occur?
- Is there effective oversight and assurance to monitor the ongoing health, availability and performance of each control?

IMCA Safety Flashes summarise key safety matters and incidents, allowing lessons to be more easily learnt for the benefit of the entire offshore industry.

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